# More swing than sting

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lease. Produced and directed by Richard Lester. Screenplay by Charles Wood, based on a novel by

happens

to you...

wouldn't

want to

either!

Patrick Ryan. Starring Michael Crawford and John Lennon.

### By Gordon Stoneham

That director Richard Lester is a sly and sassy fellow when it comes to poking fun at various absurdities of contemporary life was aptly demonstrated not only i the two films he made with the Beatles, but also in the richly satiric spoofing of sexual inclinations and attitudes that made up the fresh and funny fabric of The Knack.

It's just possible, though, that he has gone a little too far in the lampooning tactics he has employed to get across the anti-war message that is the basis of his new movie, a devious and disorderly tragi-comedy called How I Won the War, which has arrived at the Main El-

To be sure, Mr. Lester is a clever chap in the sheer techniques of exuberant movie-making. He is fast, gle. flamboyant and brimming with original ideas in his cinematic projection of offbeat material. And he obviously has a devilish, if sometimes macabre, sense of humor.

### Insanity of war

But mocking the insanity of war, ridiculing and caricaturing the participants, and using a broad comedy approach to underline the horror of battle, is a pretty tricky business, and for all the brilliance of Mr. Lester's sharp, surrealistic style of presentation, there is something vaguely uncomfortable about How I Won the War.

ish and futile it all is through a vaudevillian narof burlesque and bloodshed isn't a valid form of dramatic expression. It's been used before.

Rather, it's that Mr. Lester has been a bit too calcu- plows crashing through the mising in setting forth the pacifist content of the film. By contrasting the flippant and funny with the ugly and nacy with harsh truths, he resulted in crippled vehicles effectively makes his points, and heavy expense. a manner that, though original, often seems terribly self-indulgent.

The whole complicated form of the movie, in fact, is the Bronson span. rather on the contrived side.

## Wild swipes

Cast in the mold of the flashback reminiscences of a young British officer of the Second World War, it leaps all over the place in kidding to a fare-thee-well all the well-worn cliches of other. more serious, service films, taking wild swipes at such things as clumsy and undisciplined draftees, the stupidity and smugness of highranking officers, stiff-upperlip heroics and misguided patriotism.

In other words, nothing is sacred to Mr. Lester, or Charles Wood, who wrote the script, and that includes inspirational war speeches, prisoner-of-war procedures,

combat strategy, and battlefield hardships.

The whole call-to-arms spectrum is mercilessly debunked.

But the going is anything but easy, with staccato switches in time and place; actual newsreel footage of Dunkirk, Dieppe, El Alamein and Arnheim being interpolated into the proceedings; events, real, imagined and prophesied, tumbling over each other; and startling monochromed sequences suddenly taking over from the technicolor print.

### British accents

Then, too, the profusion of heavy provincial British accents has a tendency to render much of the dialogue unintelligible, and a number of the film's more sardonic observations are too casually thrown away.

Still it's all very flashily done, all very intriguing from a strictly technical an-

And it's well acted by its predominantly male cast, which includes Michael Crawford as the officer relating his experiences, Ray Kinnear, John Lennon, Lee Montague, Jack MacGowran and Jack Hedley as the principal misfits in his platoon, and Michael Hordern as a senior officer living in a very private world.

In the long run, however, it's not quite as devastating a satire as Mr. Lester presumably intended. Its comedy is black enough, but How Won the War has more swing than sting.



## Bouquet to the winner

Francine Cousineau, 18, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. G. O. Cousineau of 774 Claude St., was chosen from among nine candidates to represent Forbes Recreational Association in the Ottawa Winter Carnival snow queen contest. Francine is a secretary with Farm Credit Corporation. Runners-up in Thursday's contest were Chantal Therrien and Lorraine Huot.

# NEW YORK (AP) - Bil- and 1966, had 70 first-place

Tennis star is honored

lie Jean King, the bouncy, votes and 525 points. outspoken housewife who re-established United States supremacy in women's tennis, beat out golf queen Kathy Whitworth and figure skating champion Peggy Fleming today in being named the female Athlete of the Year for 1967.

In a vote of 372 sports writers and broadcasters participating in the annual Associated Press poll, Mrs. King, from Long Beach, Calif., drew 196 first-place votes and 854 points.

Miss Whitworth, the leading female athlete in 1965



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# It's not, goodness knows, that he is showing how fool- Firm would spare plows rative structure. And it's not that the jolting juxtaposition from carnival dunking

An Ottawa trucking firm equipment and paying the Way will pay damages and has offered to guarantee the cost of getting its vehicles expenses if plows break city against any more snowlating, a mite too uncompro- ice of Dow's Lake and Ri-Dow's Lake ice and guaran- lake, using its own equipdeau Canal.

For the past two years, at- plows. Tests will be made tempts to plow the lake and, every 25 feet and Wheel-a- ering the offer. obscene, by mixing sheer lu- canal for the winter carnival

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